

# Drivers could face hundreds of dollars in fines



(Brig Cabe/Examiner )  
Ryan Proctor, road side detector operator for Environmental Systems Products, checks the alignment of his mirror array Wednesday in Vienna, Va., with an infrared laser that monitors carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions from passing vehicles.

Christy Goodman, The Examiner  
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## Fairfax County -

Northern Virginia has deployed roving detection systems that can test car emissions remotely without a driver's knowledge. Failure to fix a car with too-high emissions can result in fines of up to \$700.

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has begun to conduct emissions tests on vehicles registered in Virginia as they drive by roadside testing stations.

All cars emit levels of hydrocarbon, carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide — the pollutants that create ozone and smog, said Staasi Heropoulous, a spokesman for Environmental Systems Products. ESP has been contracted to travel as far as Loudoun and Prince William counties to test some 275,000 vehicles a year. ESP employees shine an infrared and an ultraviolet beam through

passing traffic. In about one second, the beam analyzes the exhaust as a camera snaps a picture of the vehicle's license plate, Heropoulous said.

Single-file traffic traveling slower than highway speeds, but accelerating, such as is found on a highway on-ramp, is an ideal testing situation, he said.

If a vehicle's emissions are too high, a letter is sent to the registered owners' home instructing them to get the vehicle inspected within 30 days. If the inspection confirms the roadside test results, the vehicle owner must repair the automobile or possibly face penalties, said Bill Hayden, a DEQ spokesman.

Drivers of exceptionally clean automobiles would be notified that they will have another year after they register their car before they need to get an emissions inspection, Hayden said. The "Clean Screen" program has yet to hit Virginia streets, but will come online in the near future, he said.

The Washington metropolitan region, including 10 localities in Northern Virginia, is under a federal mandate to reduce harmful pollution levels to meet federal standards. Already this year, the region has had 11 days of unhealthy ozone levels that required orange, red or purple warnings, said Joan Rohlfs, regional chief of air quality planning.

"Reducing pollutants from vehicle exhaust is a critical component of achieving better air quality," David Paylor, DEQ director, said in a statement. "This program is designed to ensure that vehicles with high emissions levels are repaired on a timely basis and may help reward drivers of clean vehicles."

## Bad air quality days in 06

» 9 orange days, which are unhealthy for children and elderly people.

» 1 red day on Monday, which was unhealthy for everyone.

» 1 purple day on Tuesday, which is extremely unhealthy for everyone.

Source: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

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